DIRKSEN ACCUSES TIMES OF A SMEAR

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Otepka Termed Harassed—Panel Weighs Nomination

WASHINGTON, April 15, (UPI)—Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen accused The New York Times today of trying to "smear" Otto F. Otepka for plugging a State Department leak.

The Senate Republican leader made his accusation before a special Senate subcommittee meeting on confirmation of Mr. Otepka to a $36,000 job as a member of the Subversive Activities Control Board.

Mr. Otepka has been the center of a security and political controversy since 1963 when Dean Rusk, then Secretary of State, dismissed him from his State Department security jobs.

Senator Dirksen urged approval of Mr. Otepka's confirmation and called him a hero who "steadfastly stood his ground" and refused to relax security investigations despite "hararrment" by the Kennedy Administration in the early 1960's.

"Time and time again Otepka was promoted, he was demoted, he was shifted, he was snubbed and he was scorned," Mr. Dirksen said. "But he stood firm" against clearing people suspected of "Communist taint."

'Harassment Not Over'

"The harassment is not over," Mr. Dirksen said. "The New York Times has assigned a reporter, Neil Sheehan, to investigate Otepka and smear him . . . This is The New York Times's way of paying Otepka back."

Senator Dirksen said Mr. Otepka, who had risen to a high State Department security job during the Eisenhower Administration, aroused The Times's ire by locating a State Department official who had "leaked" to The Times results of a secret State Department survey concluding that United States prestige had declined abroad.

John F. Kennedy used the survey results in his 1960 Presidential campaign. But Mr. Dirksen said that as a result of Mr. Otepka's investigation, the man who leaked the story was ousted.

After President Kennedy assumed office, Senator Dirksen said, he rehired the man who promoted him. The Illinois Republican said he did not recall the official's name.

Senator Dirksen said Mr. Sheehan, in his articles, "tried to put a John Birch tag" on James Stewart of Palatine, Ill., who raised $22,000 to help pay Mr. Ootepka's legal expenses, and on a Boston rally attended by Mr. Otepka.

"The idea of trying to put a John Birch tag on a rally like that!" Mr. Dirksen said. "There were 1,000 people there." He said the speakers included Clarence Manion, former Notre Dame law dean.

Mr. Otepka also was praised today by the three Senators conducting the hearing, all stanch allies of the controversial official since Mr. Rusk dismissed him for giving confidential State Department documents to the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, headed by James O. Eastland, Democrat of Mississippi.

"You have been punished because you tried to protect your country," Mr. Eastland told Mr. Otepka today. Mr. Otepka was asked no questions and made no statement except to thank the Senators.

"I have confidence in you," said Senator John L. McClellan, Democrat of Arkansas. "I think you have been mistreated."

"I will support this nomination and do what I can to get him confirmed," said Senator Roman L. Hurska, Republican of Nebraska.

Nigerians Report Capture of Town

LAGOS, Nigeria, April 15 (AP)—The Nigerian Army reported today that it had captured the Biafran town of Bende, about 10 miles northeast of Umuahia, the secessionists' administrative capital.

The town, which had a prewar population of about 20,000, is seven miles southeast of Uzuakoli, which the federal army occupied almost two weeks ago in a renewed offensive from the north against the secessionists.

According to witnesses in Umuahia as recently as Thursday, thousands of people there were trying to flee the city and were turned back by Biafran police and soldiers.

The New York Times April 16, 1969

GENEVA, April 15 (Reuters)—Umuahia is being shelled by federal Nigerian troops and some civilians are evacuating the town, sources close to the International Committee of the Red Cross said tonight. [In Lagos, a senior army spokesman said he could not confirm reports that Umuahia was being

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 15—The Times article Senator Dirksen referred to appeared on April 4 and said that the annual God, Family and Country Rally in Boston was "organized by Birch Society leadrs."

The article said the chairman of the rally was Col. Laurence E. Bunker, another member of the Birch national council, and that the executive secretary was Mrs. Harold N. McKinney, a Birch chapter leader in the Boston area. Mrs. McKinney was cited in the article as saying that Mr. Otepka attended the rally as an invited guest.

Medford Evans, book review editor for the Birch Society magazine and managing editor of The Citizen, the segregationist white Citizens Council weekly, was quoted in the article as saying that "at least half the people there were John Birchers" and that while the rally is not an official function of the Birch Society "there is a lot of overlap."

Dean Clarence Manion said in a telephone conversation today from his office in South Bend, Ind., that he was a member of the national council of the John Birch Society and has been for a number of years.